

*the background | the issues | the people*

# Ghana

*Rachel Naylor*



**An Oxfam Country Profile**

# Ghana

*Rachel Naylor*



**Oxfam**

First published by Oxfam GB in 2000

© Oxfam GB 2000

ISBN 0 85598 431 7

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

All rights reserved. Reproduction, copy, transmission, or translation of any part of this publication may be made only under the following conditions:

- With the prior written permission of the publisher; or
- With a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd., 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE, UK, or from another national licensing agency; or
- For quotation in a review of the work; or
- Under the terms set out below.

This publication is copyright, but may be reproduced by any method without fee for teaching purposes, but not for resale. Formal permission is required for all such uses, but normally will be granted immediately. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher, and a fee may be payable.

Available from the following agents:

**USA:** Stylus Publishing LLC,  
PO Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605, USA  
tel: +1 (0)703 661 1581; fax: +1 (0)703 661 1547;  
email: styluspub@aol.com; website www.styluspub.com

**Canada:** Fernwood Books Ltd,  
PO Box 9409, Stn. 'A', Halifax, N.S. B3K 5S3, Canada  
tel: +1 (0)902 422 3302; fax: +1 (0)902 422 3179;  
e-mail: fernwood@istar.ca

**India:** Maya Publishers Pvt Ltd,  
113-B, Shapur Jat, New Delhi-110049, India  
tel: +91 (0)11 649 4850; fax: +91 (0)11 649 1039;  
email: surit@del2.vsnl.net.in

K Krishnamurthy,  
23 Thanikachalan Road, Madras 600017, India  
tel: +91 (0)44 434 4519; fax: +91 (0)44 434 2009;  
email: ksm@md2.vsnl.net.in

**South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland:**  
David Philip Publishers,  
PO Box 23408, Claremont 7735, South Africa  
tel: +27 (0)21 64 4136; fax: +27(0)21 64 3358;  
email: dppsales@iafrica.com

**Tanzania:** Mkuki na Nyota Publishers,  
PO Box 4246, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania  
tel/fax: +255 (0)51 180479, email: mkuki@ud.co.tz

**Australia:** Bush Books,  
PO Box 1958, Gosford, NSW 2250, Australia  
tel: +61 (0)2 043 233 274; fax: +61 (0)2 092 122 468,  
email: bushbook@ozemail.com.au

**Rest of the world:** contact Oxfam Publishing,  
274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK.  
tel. +44 (0)1865 311 311; fax +44 (0)1865 313 925;  
email publish@oxfam.org.uk;  
website www.oxfam.org.uk/publications.html

**Printed by**  
Information Press, Southfield Road, Eynsham OX8 1JJ, UK

**Published by**  
Oxfam GB, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK

**Series designed by**  
Richard Morris, Stonesfield Design.  
This title designed by Richard Morris.  
Typeset in FF Scala and Gill Sans.

**Cover designed by**  
Rowie Christopher

Oxfam GB is a registered charity, no. 202 918, and is a member of Oxfam International.

**Photo acknowledgements:**

Toby Adamson (©Oxfam GB): 5 main, 7 main, 9 bottom, 10 top, 12, 14 left, 21, 32, 33, 35 bottom, 38, 40 right, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 54, 55, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62 main, 63, 65, 70, 72, 73, 77, 78, 79, 81, 86

Sarah Errington (©Oxfam GB): 5 top, 6 right, 7 top, 9 top, 10 bottom left, 24, 35 top, 41, 42/3 main, 45, 51, 74 left

Rachel Naylor (©Oxfam GB): 71

Marcus Rose (©Oxfam GB): 6 left, 20, 25, 30 main, 53, 64

Penny Tweedie (©Oxfam GB): 4, 10 bottom right, 13, 15, 26, 28, 39, 40 left, 52, 62 bottom, 66, 67, 69, 74 right, 85

AKG: 14 main, 17, 80

British Museum: 59, 68

Ghanaian High Commission London: 31

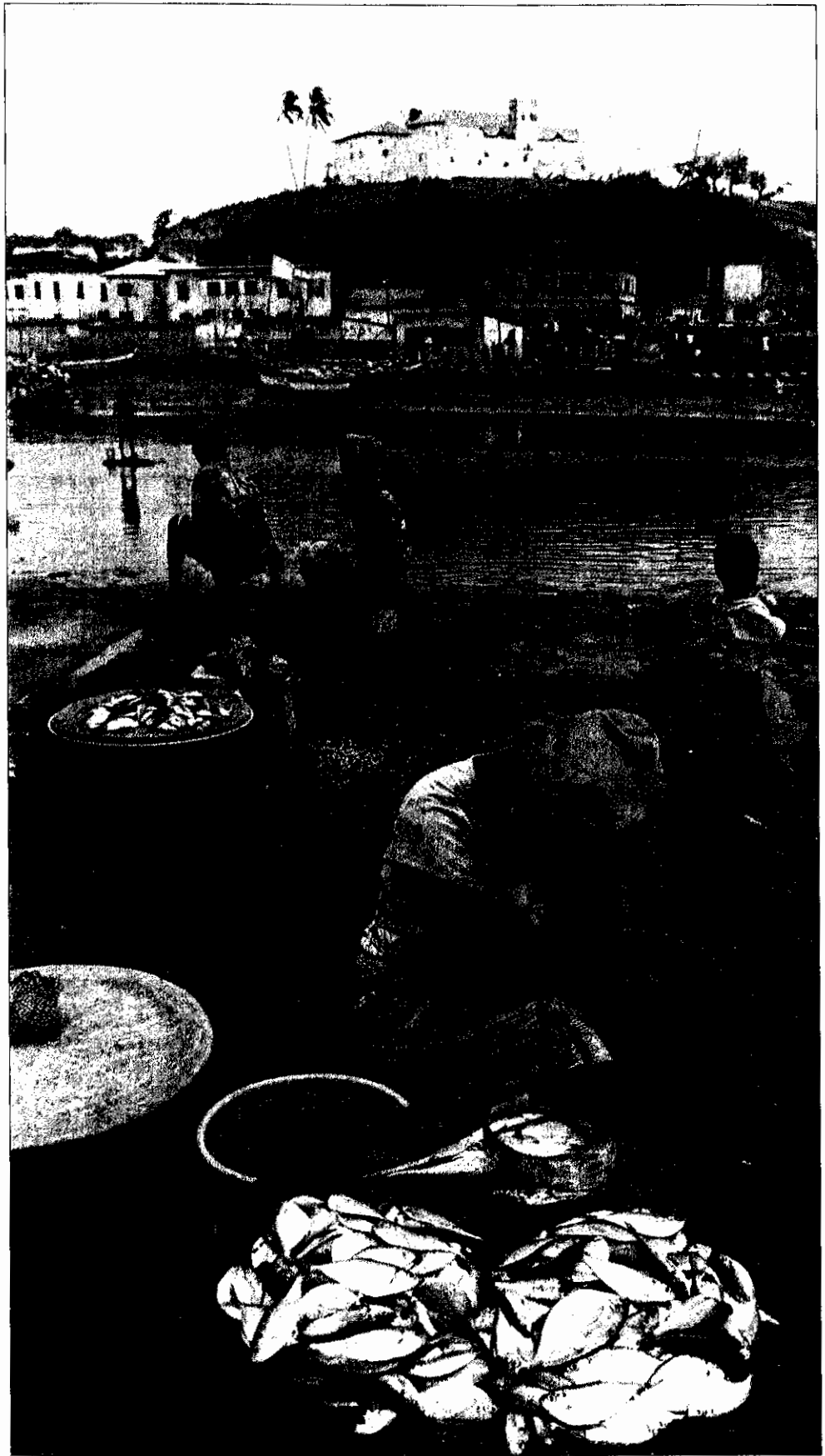
Hulton Getty: 19, 23

Ike Essel, Uhuru: 27

Tanko: 36

# Contents

<b>Introduction: all in a nation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Tropical coast to sub-Saharan</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>From Gold Coast to Ghana</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>From dream to despair</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Structural adjustment</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Democracy, decentralisation, and development</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Oral culture, story-telling, and the media</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>The basics: health and water</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Education for all</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Living off the land</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Minerals, manufacturing and industry</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Urban Ghana</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Clothing, festivals, and the visual arts</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Culture, tradition, and change</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Violence and conflict in Ghana</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Facing the future: into the new millennium</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Dates and events</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Facts and figures</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Sources and further reading</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Oxfam in Ghana</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>87</b>



*Selling fish on the quay in Elmina, situated on the Gulf of Guinea. The Portuguese, who were among the first Europeans to reach West Africa, built Elmina Castle in 1481.*

# Introduction: all in a nation



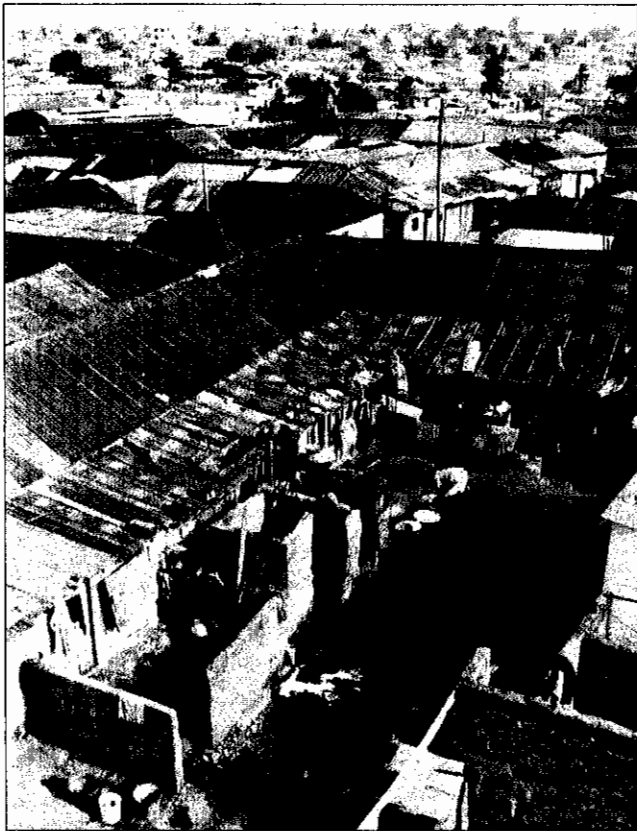
Women in Zawara village, northwest Ghana, draw water from a hand-operated well that has relieved the women of long treks to find water.

To paint a picture of Ghana requires a palette of many colours. On the Gulf of Guinea, fishermen haul their canoes onto palm-fringed white beaches. Amid towering tropical rainforests, women with babies on their backs walk tall, headloading firewood. In the north, fat baobab trees dominate wide expanses of dry savannah where farmers bend double, weeding groundnut crops. Hauntingly beautiful white-washed castles overlook the coast, stainless walls masking a sordid past; there are low-rise, rusty zinc-roofed cities and tiny thatch-roofed villages. Throbbing notes of the latest highlife and gospel

tunes contrast with the midnight melancholy sounds of Fulani pipers' flutes. At stations, anxious calls of 'ice water' come from young girls hawking refreshments in torn t-shirts. The horns of impatient *trotro* drivers mingle with the regular thump of sweating cooks pounding yams for weary travellers. Acrid smoke spills from Tema's workshops. The smell of boiling *light soup* stings the air with pepper. Sharp-suited officials inhabit Accra offices, and on the city's catwalks, beautiful men and women sport wax-print body creations. Rich black and red robes worn by solemn Akan mourners vie with vibrant many-coloured cloth strips slung from the looms of Kente weavers.



Markets like this one in Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city, offer a wide choice of fabrics to fashion-conscious shoppers.



▲ A land of contrasts: Nima, a crowded neighbourhood on the outskirts of Accra, and a grain store in a rural village in northern Ghana.

In the contemporary world, Ghana is renowned for its cocoa and its gold, and for being the birthplace of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. What else is behind this picture?

Named after a wealthy and powerful mediaeval empire, Ghana is both a nation and a collection of disparate peoples. Ghanaians have a strong sense of national identity and are proud of their history and their independence. As citizens of the 'Black Star of Africa', they unite behind their football teams: the Black Meteors, the Black Satellites, the Black Stars, and, not forgetting the women's national team, the Black Queens. Ghana-wide, there are shared cultural traditions, including the proverbial Ghanaian hospitality.

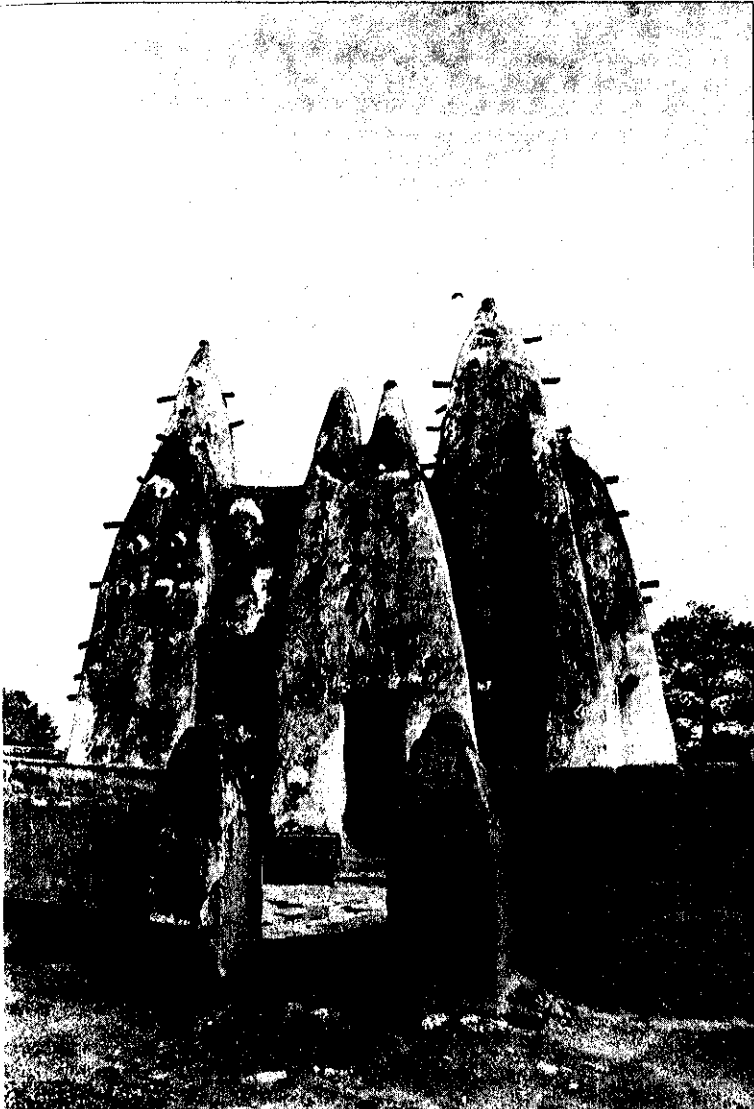
At the same time, Ghanaians are divided into about 60 distinct ethnic groups with their own traditions, languages, ambitions, and grievances. There are four main groups: Akan speakers (mainly living in the Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Western, Central, and Eastern regions), the Ga-Adangbe (Greater Accra region), Mole-Dagbani speakers (Upper West, Upper East, and the Northern regions) and the Ewe (Volta region). There are also significant ethnic minorities in Ghana, such as the Lebanese, who dominate in medium-scale business, and the Fulani, many of whom are cattle keepers by tradition, who live in many parts of West Africa.

Since Ghana's borders are a product of colonialism rather than following ethnic lines, many Ghanaians have ethnic and kinship connections with neighbouring countries. The Ewe and Konkomba people

span the border to Togo in the east, Akan speakers live on both sides of the western frontier with Côte d'Ivoire, and the Frafra and Mossi live across the northern border in Burkina Faso.

Ethnic identities evolve with political and economic conditions and vary according to the standpoint of the commentator – but we can sketch a broad outline. The biggest ethnic family in Ghana is Akan-speaking and includes subjects of the centralised Ashanti, Brong, and Fanti traditional states. Akan peoples are culturally distinctive in Ghana because they have a tradition of inheritance through the maternal line. The Ewe have a less centralised form of traditional political rule, and unlike Akan, the Ewe language group is made up of dialects not all of which are mutually intelligible. The Ewe claim to be the inventors of the famous *kente* cloth, worn like togas by men and as wrap-arounds by women, whose colourful patterns carry great cultural significance. Ga people were well known in Ghana for a unique residence tradition whereby husbands and wives lived separately with their own kin. Today, they are highly urbanised, living in Accra, the national capital.

▼ Nakori mosque near Wa, built in Malian style with white-washed mud walls and black-painted wooden supports. The thick walls keep the interior very cool.



In the savannah environment of the north live the citizens of Gonja, Dagomba, Mamprusi, and other smaller states, and peoples which have traditionally lived in non-centralised societies, for example the Tallensi, Konkomba, Dagarti, Frafra, Bimoba, Balsa, and Sisaala. Northern Ghanaians have distinct social and cultural traditions. The cultural association of northern chiefs with horses can easily be spotted, as can the traditional smock dress worn by men from many of the ethnic groups. Linguistics experts note that while Akan, Ewe and Ga have a common ancestral language (which they term Kwa), most northern languages have a common parent language (Gur) which is only very remotely related to Kwa.

A north-south divide, which follows this cultural and environmental difference, is an important watershed in Ghanaian life. It is reinforced by different experiences of history: in the colonial era, economic and social development were promoted in the south whereas the north was largely administered as a labour reserve. To some extent, the focus of government development work remains in the south. As a result, poverty and underdevelopment are concentrated in the north, although there are pockets of deep disadvantage in many parts of Ghana. The north also has a different religious





3. Men cycling home after drumming at a funeral in Tampion village in the Northern Region.

and political history. This area saw an early Islamic influence while later Christian missionary activity was curtailed here under colonialism. The unique dynamic of the relationship between the centralised traditional states and the non-centralised ethnic groups of the northern area was, and remains, central to its local political history.

There are also stark contrasts between rich and poor in Ghana, but by international standards the disparities are moderate.

Ghanaians tend to maintain links with large extended families – ties of affection, but also links which entail obligations and benefits and act as lines of redistribution of wealth and opportunity.

The majority of Ghanaians continue to live on the land, and there is a strong contrast between urban and rural life. But again, there are solid links between the two in Ghana, because of family relationships and economic necessity. In all but the largest cities, families travel to surrounding areas to farm in order to supplement urban earnings. Wealthier city Ghanaians may not visit the village each weekend, but usually invest capital in cash cropping and make time to visit their plantations during the agricultural year. The links between city and village are only broken if the urban dweller cannot afford to meet obligations in his or her home village, especially helping with expensive funeral rites.

#### **WORKING IN THE CITY, FARMING IN THE COUNTRY**

Kofi Poku-Agyemang is typical of the new generation of young urban Ghanaians. His family considered education a priority: Kofi and his brother and sister were sent to school and studied hard. But opportunities are still limited, and Kofi now runs a communication centre in Kumasi where people come to make telephone calls. Kofi manages to make a slim profit but it is not enough to meet his family's needs. He lives with his father, a retired teacher whose small pension cannot make up the shortfall. Like many Ghanaians, the Poku-Agyemangs go to their farm every few weeks. They cultivate maize, yams, and cocoa which they sell to boost their income. They keep some of the yams for family consumption.

Since the mid-1980s, international financial institutions have hailed Ghana as a flagship for economic reform in Africa. Despite the plaudits, for people like Kofi Poku-Agyemang, Ghana seems to have been ravaged by economic and political problems. Has the country that had such bright prospects when it became the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain its independence from colonial rule failed to fulfil its promise?

This book tries to answer this question by introducing some of the main obstacles to prosperity and democracy in Ghana today and showing how ordinary people experience, and struggle to cope with, these realities. It looks at the impact of the country's troubled history, of the ongoing attempts to put Ghana's economic and political house in order, as well as the conflict which has flared up in recent years. The book ends by asking what hope there is for the future.

# Tropical coast to sub-Saharan

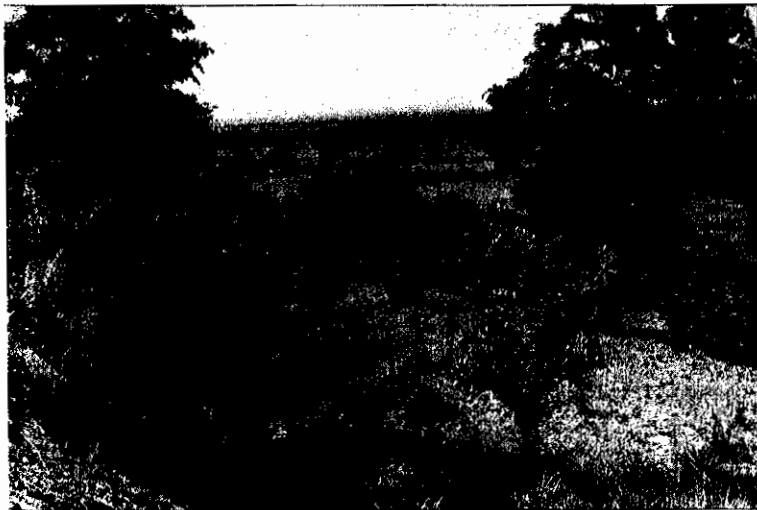


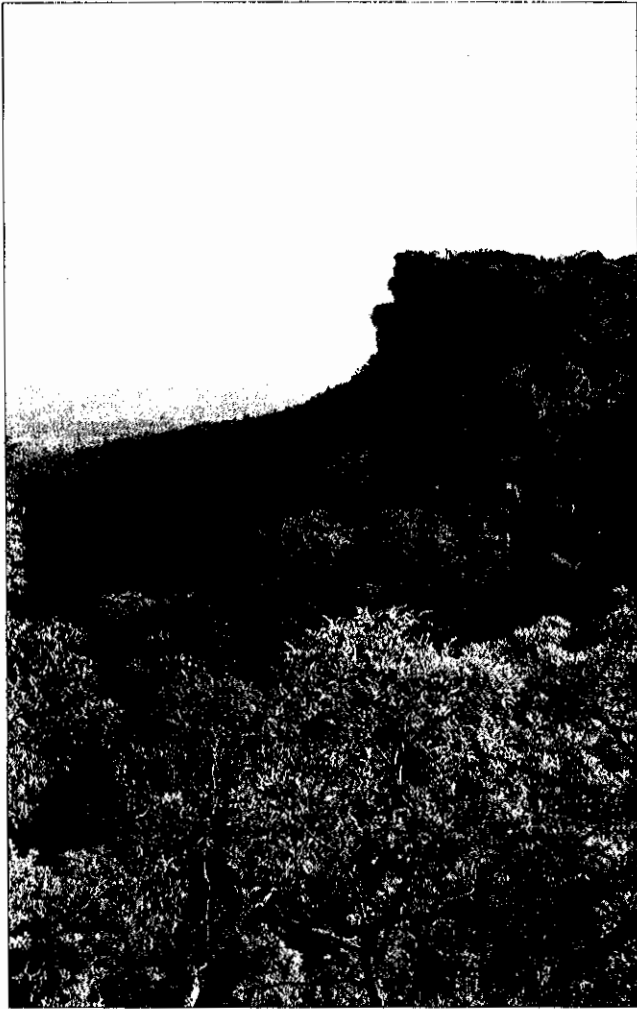
▲ ▼ Northern Ghana in the dry and rainy season: from dry red earth to fertile green landscape.

Ghana lies on the coast of West Africa, on the Gulf of Guinea. It is bordered by Burkina Faso to the north, Togo to the east, and Côte d'Ivoire to the west. The dry savannah grasslands of interior West Africa cover northern Ghana, with low and unpredictable rainfall concentrated in a single rainy season between April and October. The area has poor soils affected by bush fires, erosion, and desertification; problems which worsen the further north you travel. Further south, the vegetation becomes more lush. In the rainforest belt of central and southern Ghana, logging has

depleted much of the tree cover but the soils remain fertile. The rains here are moderate and more predictable, falling in two seasons which permits double cropping. The southern coastal strip is mostly dry grassland.

The dominant geographical feature in Ghana is the Volta Lake, enlarged in the 1960s by the construction of the Akosombo dam to become the world's largest artificial lake. As well as providing an economic livelihood for fishing communities, it is also navigable, and there is constant north-south passenger and freight traffic. The Volta even boasts a hospital boat which takes medical services to remote communities on the





▲ Gambaga escarpment near Nakpanduri, during the rainy season.

▼ A building in Bonwire, near Kumasi, bears witness to the colonial influence on Ghana, and the futuristic National Theatre in Accra dominates the city's skyline.

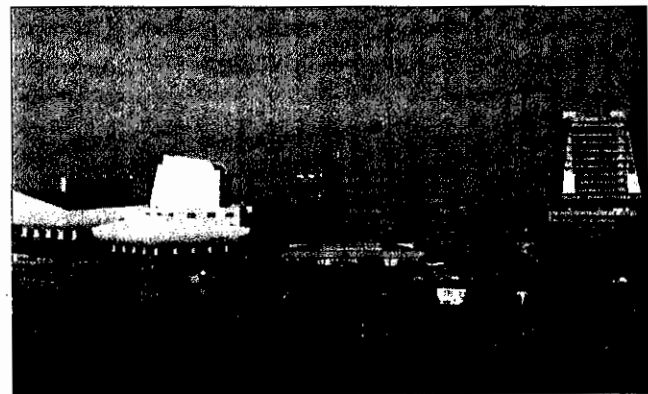
lake. Ghana is also served by a rapidly improving road network: reliable public transport connects small towns, cities, and international destinations.

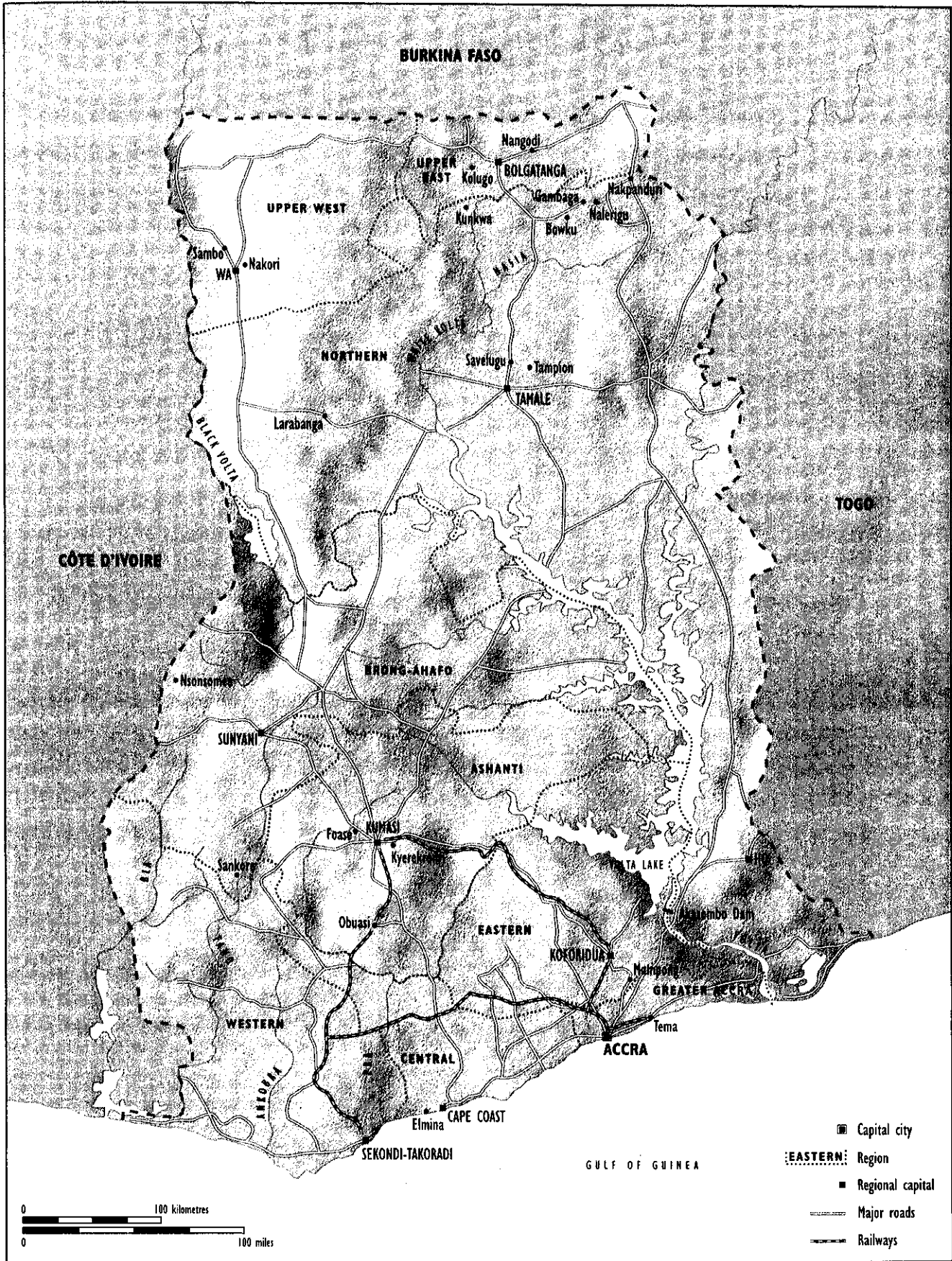
The most dramatic land feature is the Gambaga escarpment which rises 457m over the hot plains of northernmost Ghana. The Akwapim hills near Accra provide a cool, lush respite from the sun-baked coastal cities.

Scattered around Ghana are forest and nature reserves. Some preserve rainforest while other conserve wildlife, including populations of savannah elephants, lions, and antelope. Some of the reserves, such as Kakum National Park in the Central Region or Mole Game Reserve in the Northern Region, are geared up for safari tours, hosting local and international visitors.

Ghanaian cities are mainly low-rise and are divided into areas named after the villages which they swallowed up in their expansion: in the capital, the term 'Accra' denotes a small area which used to be a Ga village. The exception to this rule is Tema, a new port which was planned on a grid matrix and is divided into numbered Communities, each with its own market and post office.

But perhaps the most dramatic buildings in Ghana are the oldest. A series of coastal forts which were used for the slave trade dominate the shoreline from east to west and are currently in use as museums, prisons, and hotels. In the north, striking black-and-white half-timbered mosques and the Wa palace stand out against the dry-season skyline. Nakori mosque is one of the oldest, reputedly dating from the seventeenth century and still in use.





# From Gold Coast to Ghana

The earliest archaeological remains of human activity in Ghana date from approximately 10,000 BC. But most peoples found in Ghana today are the descendants of more recent immigrants, who came from the north and east and had established states by the end of the sixteenth century AD. Some peoples established non-state 'segmentary' societies without secular leaders, but even their histories were strongly influenced by the development of the states.

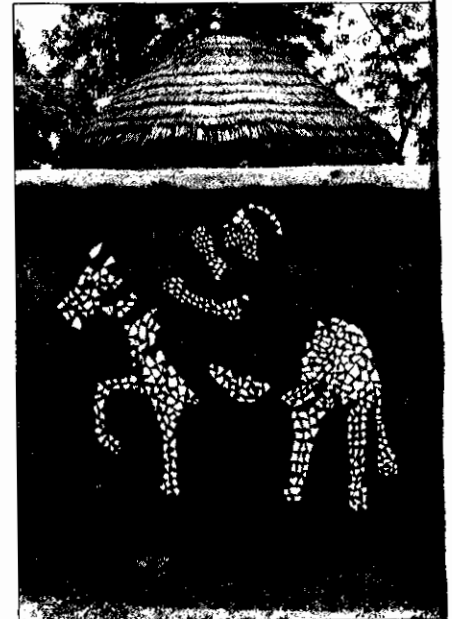
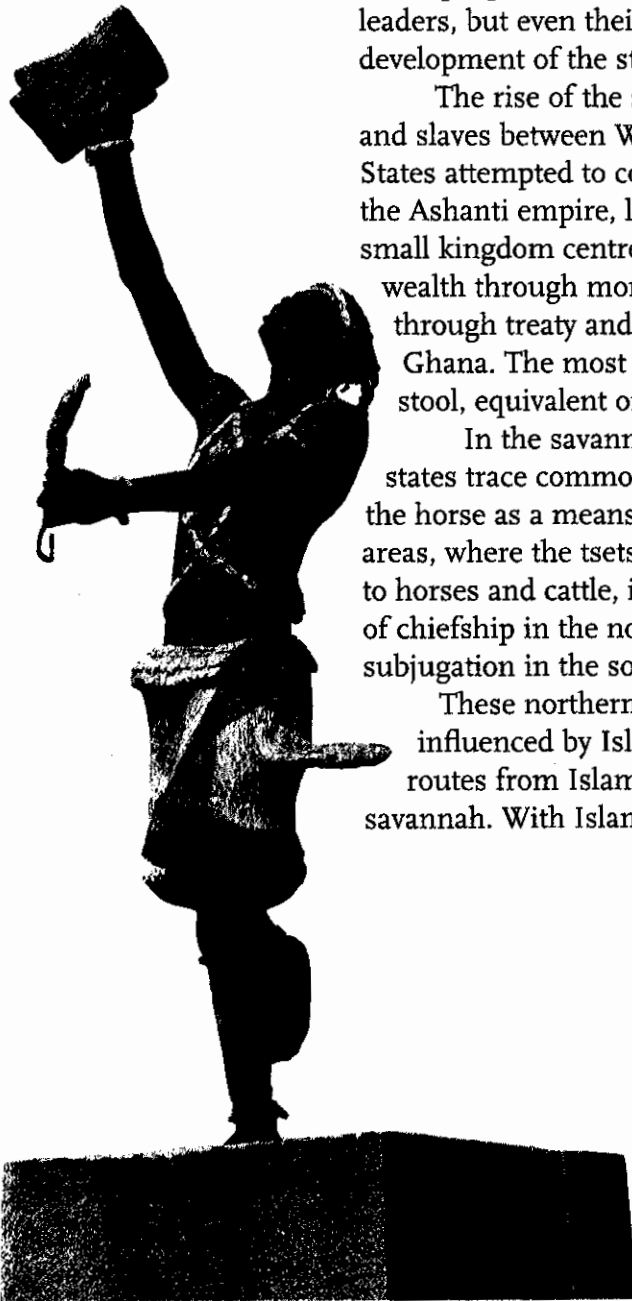
The rise of the states was associated with the growth of trade in gold and slaves between West and northern Africa across the Sahara desert. States attempted to control and tax this trade. The most well-known state, the Ashanti empire, located in the forest area of central Ghana, began as a small kingdom centred on its capital Kumasi. The Ashanti earned great wealth through monopolisation of gold mining and trade, and expanded through treaty and conquest to control much of what is present-day Ghana. The most important symbol of the state remains the golden stool, equivalent of a throne, known as the 'soul' of Ashanti.

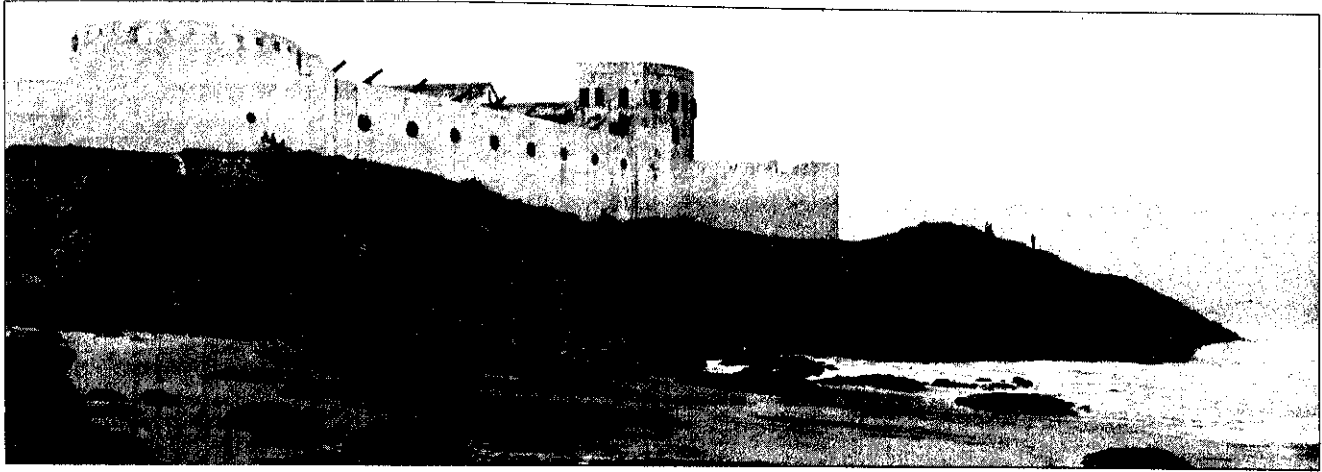
In the savannah areas, the Mamprusi, Dagomba, and Nanumba states trace common ancestry to an immigrant group. They monopolised the horse as a means of warfare. (The horse could not be used in the forest areas, where the tsetse fly, which spreads the fatal disease trypanosomiasis to horses and cattle, is endemic.) The horse remains an important symbol of chiefship in the north. The gun was the most important means of subjugation in the southern states.

These northern states were strongly influenced by Islam, brought along the trade routes from Islamic states elsewhere in the savannah. With Islam also came writing.

*A statue in Kumasi which represents the conjuring of the golden stool from the sky. According to legend, Okomfo Anokye, priest to the great Ashanti king Osei Tutu I, performed this feat in the late seventeenth century. When British colonists wanted to take the stool away as a sign of victory, the Ashanti handed over a replica.*

*A symbol of chiefly status depicted on a compound wall at the National Cultural Centre in Tamale.*





*Cape Coast castle, headquarters of British operations from 1665 to 1876, where thousands of slaves were held in dungeons before being transported across the Atlantic.*

## ANCIENT GHANA

'Ghana' was a fabulously wealthy and powerful early West African state whose prosperity was built on its control of the gold trade. It was situated to the north west of present-day Ghana. Although it went into decline in the eleventh century, its fame lives on. Because of its reputation and its foundation in gold, 'Ghana' was chosen as the name of the former 'Gold Coast' when the country won its independence from British rule in 1957.

## The relationship with new European arrivals

The lure of gold and slaves brought European traders to the coast of Africa as soon as sailing technology permitted. The interaction of the African states and the new arrivals was to have a profound influence on the area that is now Ghana. Africans' drive to profit from the new trading opportunities afforded by the arrival of European traders accelerated state formation. While Ga and Fante peoples organised themselves to control opportunities for gain as 'middlemen' on the coast, interior states crystallised around control of the gold trade (the Akan states) and later the slave trade (the Ashanti, Fante and Ahanta, and northern states). At the same time, slavery took a huge toll on the populations of the interior.

The first traders to arrive were French; by the end of the fourteenth century they had set up a trading post at Elmina. Although they abandoned it, the Portuguese later established themselves in the same place, building the first coastal fort at Elmina in the late fifteenth century. Another century on, Danish and Swedish traders started to establish themselves, and the British soon followed suit. The Europeans constructed forts for defence against African land attack and sea attack by other Europeans. Because of their initial interest in the gold trade, the stretch of coast along which their castles were built became known as the 'Gold Coast'.

The rising demand for labour from the plantations established in the Americas during the sixteenth century resulted in the trans-Atlantic slave trade becoming more important than gold. This foul trade saw slaves kept in the most intolerable, filthy, overcrowded conditions in the coastal forts and then on board slave ships. Death rates were extremely high. It is estimated that 6.3 million slaves were shipped from West Africa to the Americas in total, about 4.5 million between 1701 and 1810.

Trading patterns continued to influence state development in Ghana, as states competed with each other to benefit from the new trading opportunities. They traded slaves for guns, textiles, and other imported items. Some coastal peoples established protection agreements with the Europeans to defend themselves against Ashanti incursions from the

'The Golden Coast, so called by Europeans on account of its abundant and copious yield of gold, ... the mother not only of many good things and treasures of nature but also of the most successful minds.'

*Professor Gothelf Loescher, University of Wittenberg, Germany, at the PhD award ceremony for Dr Anthony William Amo, first-known Ghanaian to be awarded a doctorate in 1734.*



▲ *European missionaries also brought their architectural styles: St Peter's Cathedral in Kumasi.*

✦ *This German etching from 1684 illustrates the colonisers' representation of Africans which emphasises the superiority of Europeans, by implication denying the existence of highly developed African cultures and political structures.*

interior. States in the interior sold slaves captured in war and perhaps also in slave-raiding campaigns, in an extension of the early trans-Saharan slave-trade. Slaves were also a part of the social structure of the states themselves, although they may have been treated better there than in the new European trade. The trans-Atlantic slave trade led to a depopulation of the sub-continent, particularly of young men. Although the area was sparsely populated, it is estimated that during the peak of the trade about 5,000 slaves were transported every year from the Gold Coast alone.

During the seventeenth century, Christian missionaries began to arrive from Europe. Their interactions with Africans also had a strong influence on the development of Ghana: as well as preaching and church-building, the missionaries built schools and agricultural stations. The first European-style school in Ghana had been established by the Portuguese at Elmina castle in the fifteenth century. Koranic schools were set up later, probably in the seventeenth century. The first Ghanaian headmaster – Philip Quaque, of the Castle School in Cape Coast, who died in 1816 – is still honoured annually.

Missionary conversion, and agricultural and educational activities were largely confined to the south of the country, and this headstart, especially in education, has had an important influence on the regional disparities in development in Ghana.

There were many intermarriages between coastal African families and Europeans, whose children, although dismissed as 'mulattos' and often looked down upon by other Africans and Europeans, had the chance to gain an education. Some of them went on to create successful trading dynasties and to become scholars of distinction. Surnames still common in Cape Coast attest to these relationships, such as Brew, Quist, Mills and de Graff.



⇒ A mural of Tetteh Quarshie among cocoa trees. Often, plantain trees are planted alongside cocoa plantations, and their leaves used in fermenting the cocoa beans.



### **The advent of cocoa**

Tetteh Quarshie, a Ghanaian, first brought cocoa to Ghana in 1878, heralding an economic revolution developed wholly by Ghanaians. The crop was quickly taken up by small-scale farmers who sold to buyers for export to European markets. As the sector developed, labour demands led to the migration of men from the poorer north to work on the cocoa plantations. This set up patterns of seasonal and long-term migration which are still evident today. Ghana remains among the leading producers of cocoa – one of the world's favourite crops.

### **British consolidation of power**

By the nineteenth century, Britain was the most important European power on the Gold Coast. Through treaties and conquest it established the Gold Coast Colony in 1876, the Ashanti Protectorate in 1886, and the Northern Territories' Protectorate in 1902. German Togoland became a League of Nations Mandate after the First World War and was administered with the Gold Coast until 1956, when residents voted to merge with the Gold Coast.

British rule was authoritarian and exploitative. It aimed at the extraction of revenue from the colony, achieved by taxing gold exports and the emerging cocoa industry. The Colony and Protectorates were administered through local chiefs under Britain's policy of 'indirect rule'. In the segmentary societies, which had no traditional chiefs, these positions were created artificially. In some cases, indirect rule bolstered the power of traditional chiefs; in others, where unpopular new chiefs were created or existing chiefs were assisted to rule over segmentary peoples, it gave rise to opposition.



Yet it was through indirect rule that traditions of Western-style local democracy and administration were established, and at the national level, a democratic tradition slowly developed through the limited involvement of Africans in the colony's Legislative Council. Legislative and Executive Councils were set up in 1850 to assist Governors with their work, in a purely advisory role. The Executive Council made recommendations on legislation and tax and consisted of a small body of British officials. The Legislative Council included the Executive council and other unofficial members, all appointed by the British government and initially chosen from British merchant interests. It was not until the turn of the twentieth century that Africans became Council members. The first six African members included three chiefs; all six came from Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi, so they were hardly representative of the colony and protectorates.

In 1925, an element of democracy was introduced when Governor Guggisberg created provincial councils of chiefs in all areas except the Northern Territories. Each council was permitted to elect six chiefs as unofficial members of the Legislative Council. Even so, this was really a move to protect British interests rather than to promote democracy. By limiting nominations to the Legislative Council to chiefs, educated Africans were left out in the cold, and a divide was created between the chiefs and the educated people.

Governor Guggisberg also put in place some development schemes as part of a ten-year plan to promote the export trade and administration of the colony. However, most of these development benefits accrued to the south. Forced labour from the north was recruited to work on many of the southern projects, increasing male depopulation of the north that had been triggered by the growth of cocoa farming. Deep-water harbours at Tema and Takoradi, a railway system linking southern commercial and mining centres, and roads were constructed. Agricultural projects were set up, mainly to assist cocoa production in the south. An education system was established to train African personnel for the administration, but again mainly benefited students from the south.

Africans were involved in spearheading the anti-slavery campaign in Europe. Ottobah Cugoano, a Fante man, published 'Thoughts and Sentiments on Slavery' in England in 1797, marshalling humanitarian and economic arguments against slavery. Cugoano had made his way from slavery in the West Indies to freedom.

### **The struggle for independence**

Prior to the nineteenth century the British government had no direct dealings with the Gold Coast. Rather, private companies such as the Royal Africa Company (which later merged with other venture to become the British Africa Company of Merchants) looked after Britain's trade interests. When the slave trade was abolished, the British government faced the question of whether to continue ties with the Gold Coast, as the abolitionists urged. The government decided to proceed with the drive towards political control of the Gold Coast for two main reasons. The first was to protect British trading interests which were threatened by a series of Ashanti invasions of the coastal area between 1807 and 1814. The second reason was ideological: a tide of imperialism was sweeping Europe, and Britain did not want to be left behind.